

DRAFT
TOWN OF DARIEN
COMMISSION ON AGING
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 21, 2010

ATTENDANCE: Joseph Pankowski, Chair; Jennifer Geddes, Vice Chair; Charlie England, Ron Heinbaugh, Mary McCarthy, Amy Squyres, Tom Valentino, Robin Woods

ABSENT: Pat Morgan

OTHERS: Beth Paris, Senior Center Coordinator; Olive Hauser, ex-officio/Social Services Director; Karl Kilduff, Administrative Officer; David Campbell, First Selectman; Sue Swiatek, Director of Parks and Recreation

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Pankowski called the Regular Meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MARCH MINUTES

**** MR. HEINBAUGH MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH MINUTES.**
**** MR. VALENTINO SECONDED.**
**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENSION (SQUYRES).**

SENIOR CENTER REPORT

Ms. Paris gave her report. She said that an issue has arisen in that the current budget for the next fiscal year does not provide for a custodian at night to close the Senior Center. Discussion followed. Mr. Kilduff said that there should be a resolution soon. While there are budgetary constraints, it is not clear as to what will take place. He said there is a bid out and they have received three responses thus far. Mr. England said at his church, they just made a custodial change. He will get information on the vendor they selected. He noted that the price was lower than what the church previously paid, and the service appears to be better. Mr. Kilduff said the bidding is closed, unfortunately.

Ms. Paris said that Senior Center activity has picked up as the weather is warming. She noted that several inquiries on care giving, and volunteer projects have been received via e-mail. She has been researching national trends for Senior Centers and Senior Services.

April Highlights:

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1st & 15th - Income tax preparation
5th - Podiatrist lecture
19th - Living Well, Spending Smart lecture
20th - Darien Library Pre-School program
20th & 21st - AARP Driving Course
28th - Game Day with DHS Core Program

Building Projects

On-going cleaning and clearing out on the second floor to maximize space. She said four cleaning companies came in to assess the building for service bids.

Work in Progress

Program planning
Policy Manual development
Developing a manual for 30 Edgerton for maintenance purposes
Developing volunteer opportunities for returning college students

Ms. Paris provided handouts for lectures on *Home Safety for Seniors* on Tuesday, June 8 at 10:30 a.m. at the Senior Center (free lunch if registered before June 7); American Red Cross is sponsoring *Emergency Preparedness for Seniors* to take place on Monday, May 3 at 12:45 p.m. at the Senior Center.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Pankowski asked Mr. Campbell to provide an update on the Senior Center issue. Mr. Campbell said that the town has established a Phase II Building Committee, and estimated costs will be available in about four or five weeks.

Mr. Kilduff spoke about the Strategic Plan that he, Ms. Paris, and Ms. Swiatek worked on. He said his team is building off of the Parks and Recreation Mission Statement. Mr. Kilduff asked if the Commissioners had any comments or suggestions.

Mr. Pankowski said that with regard to the Senior Center, the word "re-invigorate" should be removed in favor of using "continuously improving" throughout the report. Mr. Campbell said that there have been on and off discussions with DCA. Mr. Pankowski noted his opposition to the DCA merging with the Senior Center. Ms. Squyres said DCA, as a stand alone entity, will be a valuable asset to the Senior Center. Mr. Campbell agreed, and said that they have good programs that are much different from what Ms. Paris schedules.

Mr. Pankowski asked about the cutoff age of 55 applying to seniors opposed to 50, which is used by AARP. Ms. Paris said that AARP started with age 50 for financial reasons which brings in paying members at an earlier age. Mr. Heinbaugh noted from past observations that lowering the age will not necessarily bring the younger people to meetings, etc.

Ms. Paris said there are instances where sons and daughters bring their parents to the Center for activities and enrichment, as well as caregivers bringing them too.

Mr. Kilduff addressed re-branding. This would incorporate a name change, possibly taking out the word Senior and calling it an Activity Center. Ms. McCarthy said that perhaps a private donor could be found, and the building named after that person. Future discussions will take place.

Mr. Campbell mentioned that many are not aware of how strong the attendance is at the Center. There are two parking lots and if one doesn't see the back lot, it could appear that only a small number are in the building. Mr. Kilduff said that since there are two lots, some people are second guessing on how many meals are served and what the attendance is.

Ms. Squyres said the Strategic Report is terrific. Ms. Woods added that the graphs are very good and easy to follow.

Mr. Campbell said we need to address future needs and said that a 50-year old female today has a life expectancy of 92 years.

Mr. Kilduff said that re-naming and re-branding will be a priority, as well as a continuation to be open-minded to change.

Ms. Hauser said that taking into consideration the current budgetary constraints, how to make the Senior Center grow without significant costs is important.

Mr. Pankowski acknowledged Mr. Kilduff, Ms. Paris, and Ms. Swiatek's commitment and their hard work on the Darien Senior Center Strategic Plan.

- ** MS. SQUIRES MOVED TO APPROVE A THANK TO MR. KILDUFF, MS. PARIS, AND MS. SWIASTEK FOR THEIR DEDICATED WORK IN PUTTING TOGETHER THE SENIOR CENTER STRATEGIC PLAN.**
- ** MR. VALENTINO SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Squyres gave an update on Aging in Place, and where the organization is going. She is a member of the Strategic Planning Committee. She said that in December a change will occur. She spoke about three options as follows:

- Aging in Place to join forces with another organization such as DCA
- Be an independent 501(c)(3) and housed at Town Hall or elsewhere
- Aging In Place is in discussions with Gallivant. There will be a broader Board in combining the two. It will become a 501(c)(3).

Ms. Squyres said that when organizations work together and combine forces, it is positive. Ultimately, greater knowledge and awareness of the many senior programs is imparted when working in concert.

She talked about a possible fee of \$50 to join Aging In Place which she does not believe will be well received. The *Out and About* newsletter provides information about all services available to seniors. The Town pays for this publication.

Mr. England talked about the upcoming car show. There will be an entry fee charged, and Aging in Place will be the beneficiary.

Ms. Squyres said that a nominating committee is in the works for the Aging in Place Board. Those persons with backgrounds in fundraising, legal, and marketing will be of particular interest.

SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT

Ms. Hauser said on May 6, Gallivant is changing dispatching and going with Drivers Unlimited. The organization is better equipped to track the van, and to determine if there is a need for a second vehicle.

She said grants were submitted for taxi vouchers and for senior activity trips.

Requests are still coming in for fuel assistance.

Residents are complaining about high taxes and storm related concerns.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, May 19, at 9:00 a.m., Room 119, Darien Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Hohlweck,
Recording Secretary